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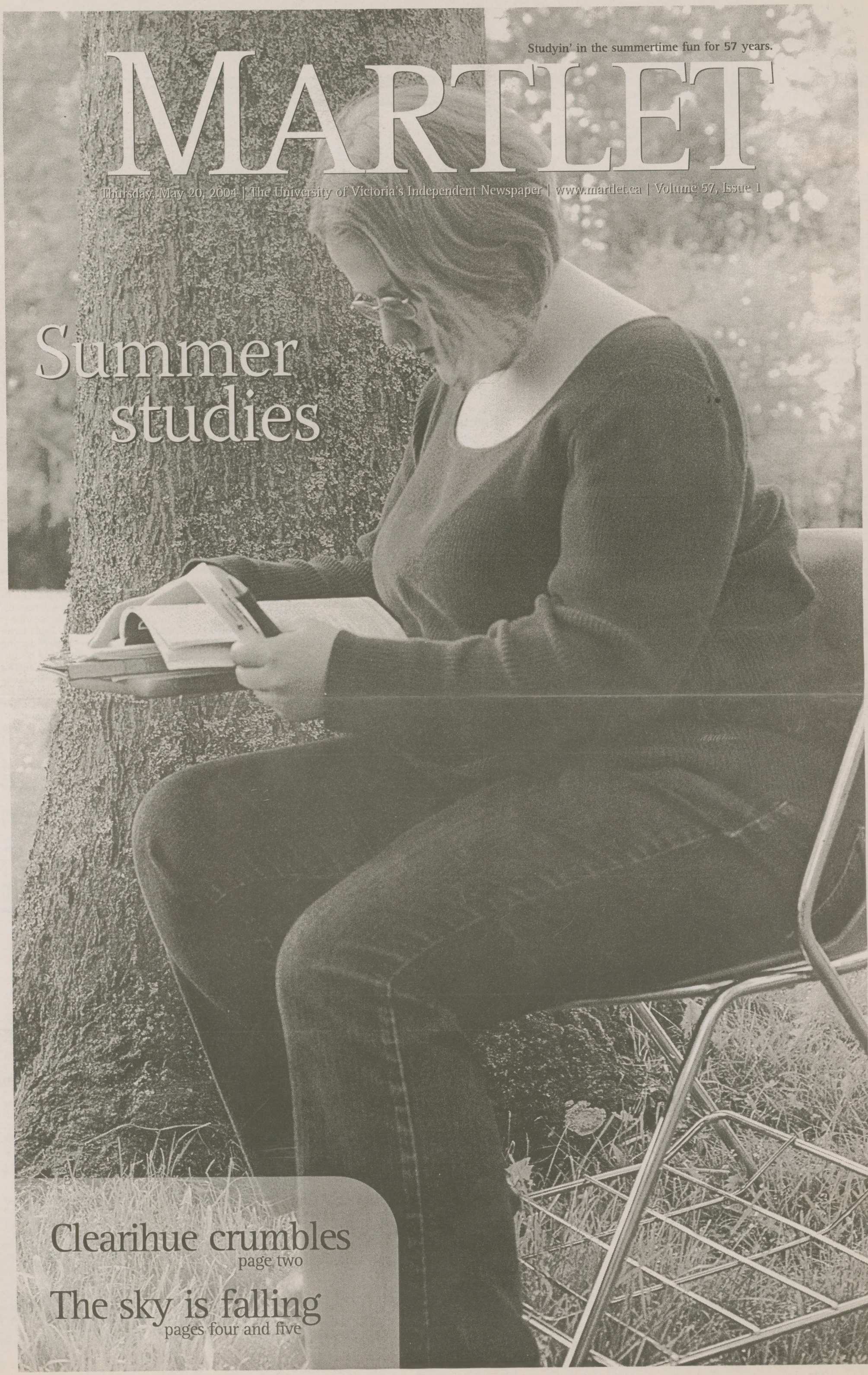
MARTLET

Thursday, May 20, 2004 | The University of Victoria's Independent Newspaper | www.martlet.ca | Volume 57, Issue 1

Summer studies



Clearihue crumbles
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Editorial

BC Liberals: Strategic or stupid?

The current Liberal government of British Columbia is either incredibly strategic or immensely stupid in the way that it is ruling the province. There are no other choices.

They have made many immense changes to the status quo with the recent Health Employees Union (HEU) debacle being only one on a growing list. It's almost as though the government is systematically targeting individual groups one by one. There are only two ways to view this attack on B.C. residents: Premier Campbell and his cronies are either targeting different groups at different times in an attempt to keep the sum total of the uprisings to a dull roar while they try to move this province away from deficit spending, or they are a collection of some of the most moronic and masochistic people in the world. There are strong arguments in favour of both of these positions.

The government has managed to unite people from diametrically opposed political stances. Take when loggers and environmentalists united as a single power to oppose the Working Forest Legislation, which is viewed as a major threat to these two groups, albeit for different reasons. Loggers fear losing their jobs to outside business while environmentalists fear the massive overexploitation of the forests that will be sure to follow.

Then one day the government cut $1.7 million that funds 37 women's centres. A representative group marched on the legislature protesting these cutbacks where they were arrested for "assault by trespass."

University students and graduating high school students are also pissed at the government for nearly doubling tuition in the past five years. Student loan funding has remained essentially unchanged. Bursaries have all but vanished. Because of this, the four year degree is becoming a much more unattainable goal. Many students are now taking classes part time while they work full or part-time jobs in order to keep themselves fed. As was seen in our last issue, some UVic students are now seriously considering not returning to classes while others are no longer taking their minors.

In addition, BC Rail and portions of BC Ferries have been privatized while the citizens of this province protest loudly, but without effect. Social security benefits have also been attacked. And the list goes on.

There is no way to know exactly what policy wonks inside government think while they enact these major changes to the social structure of this province. They could be trying in earnest to fix the financial mess that past governments have created–everyone knows that deficit spending will not work forever.

If that's the case, then judging by the amount of unrest produced by each change, they are exercising good judgment by not changing everything at once. To have done so would undoubtedly have caused outright revolt.

When the people of B.C. cast their ballots next, will they remember our present political leaders as mean-spirited morons or pragmatic strategists? As it stands, the image of a slack-jawed, drooling imbecile is probably more prominent. Whether or not the economy turns around in time will determine the outcome.

Editorial topics are decided on at weekly editorial meetings and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all staff members.

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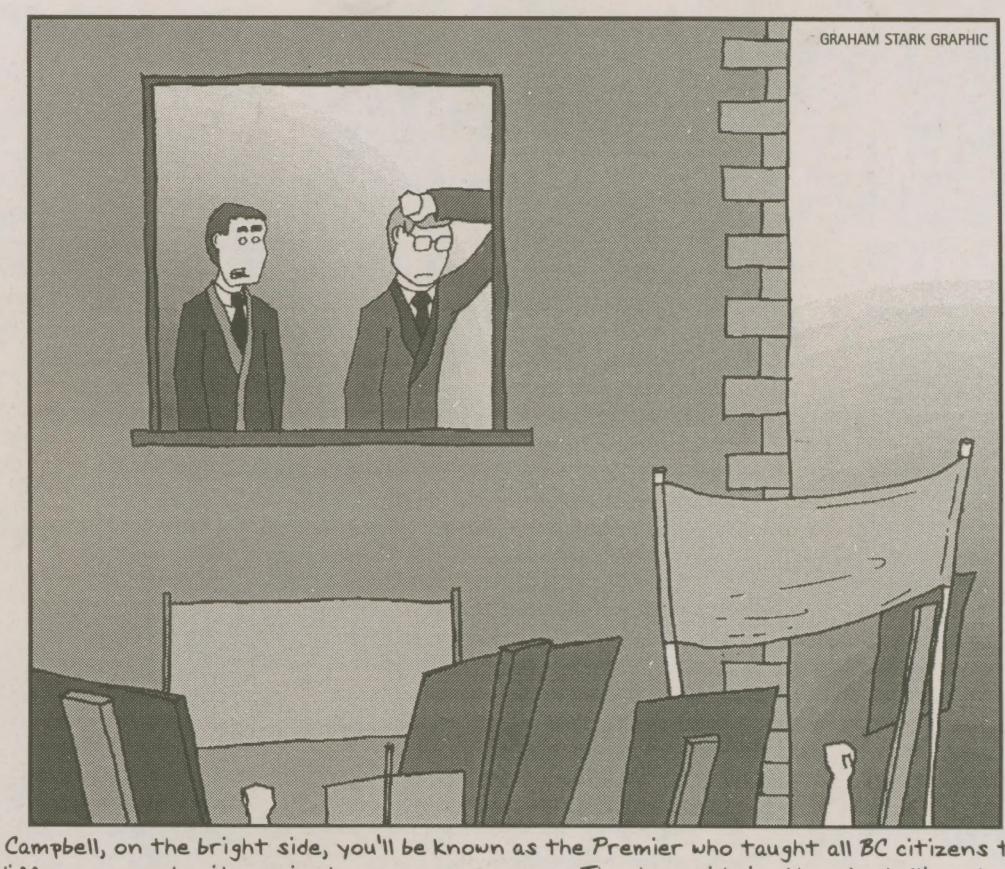


"Well, Mr. Campbell, on the bright side, you'll be known as the Premier who taught all BC citizens to overcome their differences and unite against one common enemy. The down side is, they just flipped your car."

Overfeeding at trough ignored

'Press not invited to 7th Annual Corporate Golden Piggy Award Show'

by Andrew Cienski

What do Victoria's media and corporate moguls have in common? Members of neither group attended the corporate Golden Piggy Awards at the Roxy Theatre this May. How do they differ? The moguls would have been welcome.

In a press release entitled "Press Not Invited to 7th Annual Corporate Golden Piggy Award Show," Art Farquharson, event organizer, poverty advocate and local activist, explained that the corporate media "never print or show anything in their publications or on their airwaves anyway, they just distract the performers with their cameras and take up valuable space in the theatre blocking the view of the audience."

He was referring particularly, but not exclusively, to last year's event where the New VI along with other major media were present, none of whom showed anything of the event afterward. The insult to the injury came when the Times Colonist covered a simultaneous corporately themed event, a convention hosted by Joe Clark in Vancouver, which had 50 fewer attendees than the Piggy Awards.

When asked what are their criteria for choosing which stories get aired, Cindy MacDonald, senior producer at the New VI, said they attempt to localize big news stories looking for "community reaction, stories that matter to people on [Vancouver] island."

She said the news department is separate from the advertising department, and that they present their news "without bias," regardless of whether it might offend advertisers or station owners. Finally, when asked why they did not cover the Piggy awards, a local and long-time popular event, she said she couldn't remember, but said the reason may have been last minute time constraints.

But Farquharson doesn't worry too much about media attention. "We don't need the attention of the rich to gather and have a good time." The Awards seem less about making a statement, and more about simply having fun. "Each year we fill the house and everyone has a grand time making fun of the rich. We realize that the rich own the major media outlets and that we'll never please them by laughing at Conrad Black, Paul Martin, Martha Stewart, Michael Eisner, Belinda Stronach and her father Frank, Ken Thompson, Kyle Washington and Dick Cheney," Farquharson said.

The event was modeled after the Academy Awards, and so after the presentation of each award, local entertainers took the stage of the Roxy Theatre performing songs and skits. After the Both-Feet-in-the-Trough Award was presented (in absentia) to Canada Steamship Lines, there was a skit where Paul Martin was depicted at the border digging through his duffel bag for a flag of convenience. Like a clown pulling an endless scarf from his nose, Martin kept pulling out flags, looking for a Canadian one. He never did find one, but he did come across a Barbados flag, in reference to Steamship's practice of flying foreign flags to avoid more stringent labour and environmental regulations.

Bobby Arbess, local musician, actor, gardener and activist opened the event with a rousing song, sung to the tune of the Washington Post March:

"Marching in and out and upside down / And all around the whole wide world / Marching every place / Committing flatus in the face / Of every man, woman, boy, and girl. / Oh yes the assholes are on parade!"

When asked for his reaction to the show, Arbess said it was a blast, "a special day set aside to laugh at these guys, at the assholes."

We're just poo-flinging monkeys

by Mitch LeBlanc

I was wandering aimlessly around campus the other day staring at people as is sometimes my wont, and it suddenly occurred to me that if you look closely enough, you can still see the resemblance between the human race and monkeys. Looking at the high foreheads and bulbous cheeks it became clear to me that there isn't really that much in the way of physical differences between the two species.

Shortly after that I realized that the entirety of human history has revolved around finding new and more socially acceptable ways for us to fling our monkey poo at one another. When the ice age ended about 10,000 years ago, human civilization began in earnest. With the advent of the green revolution, we were free to move away from semi-tribal existences and develop politics and money, war and art. Unfortunately, it all revolves around new methods for one monkey to show power over another in fascinating, new ways. Though we no longer pick up our fecal matter and toss it at those over whom we hold power, it really couldn't be much worse than the actions that we presently commit in our search for dominance over our neighbours.

Alpha monkeys no longer need to physically fight for dominance of the monkey troop, now they fight each other with words while fishing for as many votes as they can muster from the followers that form the rest of society. In fact, if ever one needed more proof that the pinnacle of society is about throwing our poo at one another, one need look no further than the world of politics where the entire process seems to be about badmouthing the competition. Harper badmouths Martin while Kerry badmouths Bush in a vicious cycle where monkeys with aspirations to power need to assert their dominance over those that already have it.

We, the masses, fall for it every time. While individuals may be smart enough to see it for the farce that it is and read between the lines, the majority of voters prefer to be led around by the nose and only see what is in front of them.

Unfortunately for the safety of the human race and most of the other species with which we share this planet, humans have also developed the ultimate poo–nuclear weapons. What started out as the great idea of free power for all was quickly subjugated by the alpha monkeys as a new means to hold dominance over the other monkey troops. Never before has it been quite as easy to obliterate huge groups of people. There are only a handful of nations with nuclear weapons in the world, and they command attention from other nations whether they are wealthy or not. It is a dance of aggression that plays itself out in closed door meetings away from the prying eyes of the members of society whose lives are at stake.

There are far too few people out there today that are actively working to establish new orders that move the race away from the brink of destruction at the hand of these alpha monkeys with their massive monkey poo bombs. Until we as a race begin to realize that our actions have very real consequences, we will be doomed to repeatedly fling our crap at one another until we have all been eradicated from the face of the planet. However, if we work hard enough to stop, then this world can become a great and truly wonderful place to live. However, if we continue taking advantage of each other in order to further ourselves, we should feel ashamed to call ourselves civilized.

Crumbling Clearihue update

by Mike Berry

A "prime example of the architectural folly and ineptitude of the '50s, '60s, and '70s . . . [it] is simply a legacy we'll have to live with."

This is the assessment of the Clearihue Building by Andrew Preston, a professor of history at the University of Victoria. Ugly. Boring in its architectural design, a product of its era. And now it is falling apart.

Stucco first began to fall from the D wing of the aging building in early February 2004, 33 years after its completion. The building's disintegration came as a surprise to the university, says projects manager Dino Valeri.

"Our main concern is safety," Valeri said.

Protective awnings and fences now close off potentially hazardous areas near the entranceways around the D wing. After the first reports of the incident, the university hired material and structural engineers to test for weak spots around the D wing. Valeri said they update the status of the building every two weeks.

Unlike other areas, the D wing has been subjected to brutal southeasterly winds. The last winter also produced unusually cold temperatures and rain, which further eroded the outside wall. A combination of time, wind and the winter all contributed to Clearihue's current state, said Valeri. Stucco was first spotted falling from the clock tower, which is exposed to more violent air currents than lower parts of the building.

Several cracks were discovered in the building after an earthquake shook the campus in February 2001, but Valeri said he doesn't believe that contributed to the building's recent decline. He also said seismic upgrading has already been performed on the building to bring it closer to the current code. The latest precautions are strictly related to the falling stucco.

The university has no money budgeted for the repairs, since the incident came unexpectedly. They are currently lobbying the provincial government for funds, but so far no dates for reconstruction have been set.

Money is not the only problem. The pit where the stucco-gravel was originally found has been exhausted, so material to replace the fallen stucco is currently unavailable.

Most students appear unconcerned by the building's crumbling façade.

"I don't feel unsafe," said Jessica Logher, a recent science graduate from UVic, as she discussed the current state of Clearihue.

But she added that construction on the building affects a large number of students because of its central location and the computer labs inside.

Andrew Preston of the history department said the building "seems to be badly in need of repairs, both major and minor." In February of this year, ceiling tiles fell from the ceiling outside his office. "Thankfully mine was of the minor sort," he said of the incident.

In 1962 the A wing of Clearihue was first built from reinforced concrete and covered with stucco, making it the first of many permanent buildings we recognize at UVic today.

In 1971 the D wing was added, followed by the C and B wings in 1976 and 1979, respectively.

Renaissance Plagiarism

by Emma Kendall

We all know the Greeks are responsible for the first major advances in medicine and astronomy that underlie our current scientific understanding, right?

Wrong, according to Professor George Saliba from Columbia University, who came to UVic to shed light on how Islamic scientists' work during the European "Dark Ages" were responsible for not only correcting flaws detected in the works of the ancient Greeks, but developing significant theories that advanced our understanding of the world, from the human body to celestial bodies.

Against a backdrop of ancient Arabic texts and simply depicted diagrams, Saliba explained how the Persians strived to perfect their understanding of the movement of the planets. A major impetus for the flowering of astronomy in Islam came from the need for a reliable system to calculate when to observe religious practices.

The name planet comes from a Greek word meaning "to wander." Ptolemy, the most prominent of Greek astronomers, formed a theory in about 150 C.E. that celestial bodies wandered in small circles, which in turn orbited the earth in larger circles. This was meant to account for the annual prograde (westward) and retrograde (reverse) motion of the observed bodies. He believed the earth was motionless and stood at the center of the universe.

In the 1200s, the Persian mathematician Nasir al-Din al-Tusi created ingenious mathematical models for use in astronomy. To develop these models, he analyzed the confusing wanderings of the stars and the Greek relationship of circles, concluding that Ptolemy's proofs were an "impossible astronomical conversation."

Something also seemed faulty with Aristotle's idea of celestial wanderings occurring in perfect circles. Just as a steam-engine piston moves back and forth as the wheel turns, Saliba explained how Tusi came to the more accurate conclusion of two separate rotations: the earth on its axis and the earth on a larger course.

It was Tusi's work, now known as the Tusi couple, along with the work of fellow astronomer Mu'ayyad al-Din al-'Urdi, summarized in Urdi's lemma, that laid a foundation on which the Polish researcher Nicolaus Copernicus, studying in the late 15th century, based his work.

In Copernicus's time, most European astronomers accepted the theory postulated by Ptolemy. Considered the founder of modern astronomy, Copernicus developed the theory that the earth orbits around the sun, and our term solar system is based on his discovery. Copernicus realized that retrograde motion occurs because the earth moves faster in its orbit than planets further from the sun. But was much of his realization in fact Renaissance plagiarism?

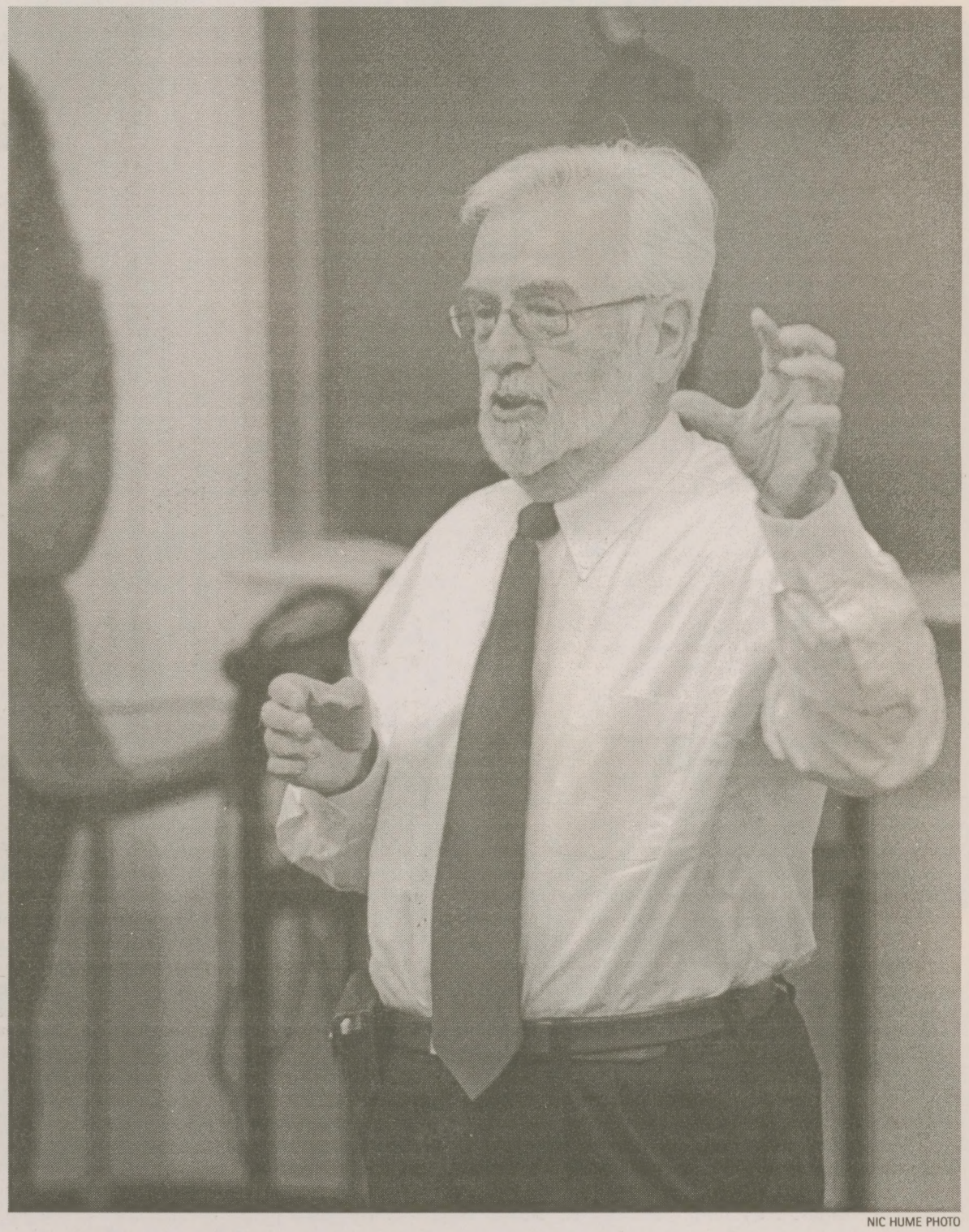
It was assumed that Copernicus was able to put together this new planetary system using available math combined with the classical Greek works. This assumption began to break down when scholars including Saliba found that to revolutionize astronomy, Copernicus needed theorems not developed by the ancient Greeks. The resulting research led to the uncovering of the Tusi couple and Urdi's Lemma, existent long before Copernicus.

Copernicus did not include a proof of the Urdi lemma in his work, most likely because the proof had already been published by Urdi himself. Saliba speculates that Copernicus didn't credit him because Muslims were not popular in sixteenth-century Europe, and because the Ottoman Empire was at the door of Europe.

Astronomy was not the only area where Islamic researchers detected faults in Greek theory and made unacknowledged contributions to European science. A 1241 Arab document, notes Saliba, lays out crucial assertions contrary to the opinion of the ancient Greek physician Galen and past medical scholarship. He argues this was behind William Harvey's medical advance in the geometry of the human circulatory system in the 1600s.

Saliba believes that the careful critique of ancient theory made by scientists of medieval Islam accounted for the eccentricities of planet motion and led to an integral theory of solar systems.

The most important scientific achievement in Western history is commonly ascribed to Copernicus. Little did we know that behind it, Saliba said in closing, lay a history of knowledge trafficking in a climate of political conflict between the Islamic and Christian worlds.



NIC HUME PHOTO

George Saliba argues that major European scientific discoveries were founded on Islamic scholarship.

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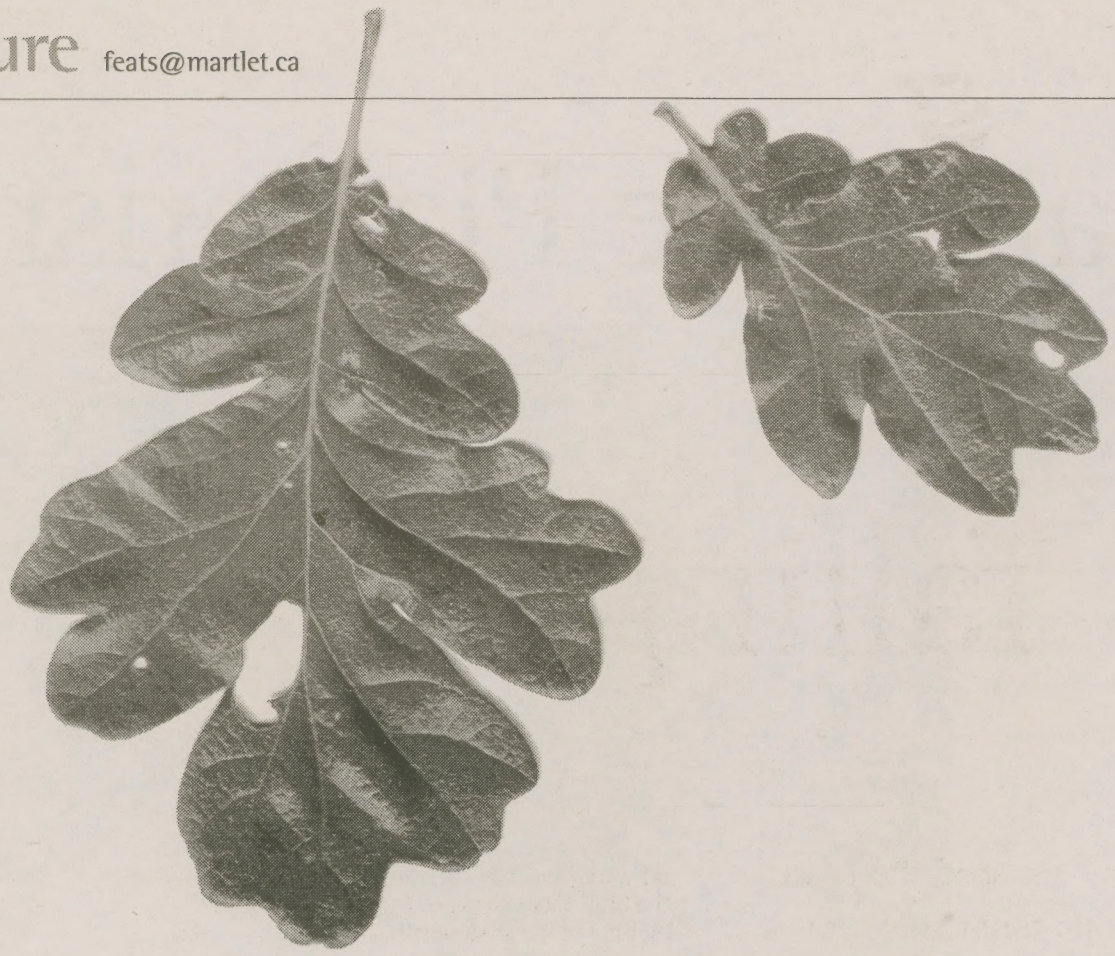

One need not even leave campus
to see a sampling of local species at risk.

The sky is falling

by Gordon de Frane

Long ago, Xaals the transformer came and changed the world. It is said that when you startle a deer, in its flight from you it will turn and pause for just an instant. In that instant when it captures your eye, that deer remembers when it was human and you were the deer. Today, Xaals and his friends Raven and Mink tackle species at risk.

"What's dat you got there?" Raven asks.

Xaals the transformer turns the many sheaves of papers this way then that. The papers rustle and whisper like aspen leaves shaken by summer's pursing lips.

"It's called a species-at-risk list," he replies.

"What's it do?" asks Mink.

"Well, not a lot. But it sure lists lots," Xaals answers. "Da ways I sees it, is dat it's the two-legs way of lookin' like dere doin' somethin'."

"Are we on the list?" Mink asks.

"Not yet. Not unless the people-of-the-land ever stop believin' in us. Till then, there's not much to worry about," Xaals says.

"Who's on the list?" Raven asks.

"Just about everyone, by the looks of it," Xaals answers. He thumbs through the pages.

Mink and Raven peer over Xaals' broad shoulders.

"Look, the Garry oaks and the Garry oak meadows are on the list," Mink cries.

"That's not so good," Raven chimes in. "The-people-of-the-windy-place lived off the land when it was covered in Garry oak meadow."

"True," Xaals murmurs as he studies the pages and words written on them, "But a new people called the wheat people walk these ancient lands."

"The wheat people are different, all right," Raven says.

"Indeed cousin they are," Xaals says. "When the people-of-the-land look at Garry oak meadows, they see tribes of blue camas, villages of Garry oak, tribes of chocolate lilies and rice root. Even in the ochre earth the people-of-the-land see the tiny communities of bacteria an' other microbes that feed an' strengthen the plant people. The people-of-the-land hears the tribes of bumblebees an' butterflies dancin' from flower to flower in their ancient meadow gardens. The people-of-the-windy-place see themselves in the Garry oak meadows alongside those who live in these places."

"What about the wheat people?" asks Mink.

"Yes what of them," Xaals echoes. "When the wheat people look at a one of these ancient landscapes, they see dollar signs in the shape of lots, an' buildins, subdivisions, timber rights, even soil rights an' air rights too."

"They sell air?" Mink asks.

"Everythin' to the wheat people is weighed an' measured an' priced, everythin' has a price," Xaals answers.

"Ohhh my, I see our cousin giant chain fern is blue-listed on the list of species at risk," Mink says.

"Giant chain fern is all but gone now," replies Xaals, "Only dat Chemainus an' Penelakut guy Gordon de Frane remembers them. He's only seen a picture of them loomin' 14 feet tall above one of dem old Cowichan valley chiefs. But he figures that since his people use sword fern today in their longhouses, an' since the picture intentionally shows a chief posin' beneath giant chain fern, dat maybe cousin giant chain fern was spiritually significant to the people-of-the-land. At least it was until it too got placed on the list."

"I see our friend white sturgeon made it onto the list too," Raven says, "Maybe I should get over to the Fraser river to see him before it's too late. Da wheat peoples call 'em livenin' fossils. I just call 'im cousin."

"Is dere anythin' we can do about the people on the list?" asks Mink. "What if we went an' talk to our friends an' family on da list an' gets dem to make more of demselves, wouldn't that help?" he offers.

"That's no guarantee," Xaals replies. "Remember passenger pigeon or buffalo? Long ago the skies would turn to twilight at mid-day when the great flyin' societies of passenger pigeon took to the skies. Back den da wheat people would come out of doors swingin' an' battin' an' beatin' wit brooms, bats an' badminton rackets like dere was no tomorrow.

"Now, not so much as a feather or beak can be found of dem, though. An' before dat, the great herds of buffalo would take several days to pass one point on the land before you ever saw the last stragglers pass by. Deir mighty herds left hoofed furrowed soil dat fostered great prairie grass villages to stretch north, south, east an' west. Da great buffalo herds made the prairie people happy an' well-fed. Agin, dem wheat people shot 'em all—well almost shot 'em all. Dem wheat people don't tink much beyond today."

"It's not like the da old ways when wees remembered the seven generations that come before us an' da seven generations dat come after us," Raven says.

"Each footstep wees take stirs da dust of the ancestors," Xaals answers.

"You know, the very tiniest people of the soil supports the biggest people of the land. An' the soil, too, is fragile an' at risk. Da thinnest layer gives life to the largest of the legged, feathered and scaled ones."

"Just like da oceans and seven seas, ennit?" Mink says.

"Yes, indeed the biggest whales of the saltwaters are fed and nourished by the tiniest of the tiny," Xaals answers. "An' yet only a mere handful of the great whales still live in the Salish seas or any of the great seas of the world."

"I remember when the Georgia straits welcomed the humpback whales. I also recall when the last one was ever seen and harvested in the straits in '29," Raven states.

"An' I kin 'member sittin' at the water's edge just at twilight, listenin' to humpback's songs and lovemakin' in the Saanich inlet, not all dat long ago," Mink adds.

"Lotsa salmon in Salish seas," Raven says. His eyes roll and sparkle.

"But the saltwaters ain't as clean as they used to be," Xaals says. "An' that B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell likes farmed salmon better. Least dats how I sees it what wit his gov'ment payin' back two million dollars in fines and penalties. When da last real salmon is gone or mounted and on display in the Royal B.C. Museum, den what?"

"An' dat Gordon Campbell an' dem B.C. Liberals also want to drill offshore oil too," Mink says. "Would just about wipe out any wild salmon left if just one of dem oil wells gets into trouble. Day sure don't tink wit dere heads. Deres lots of power an' energy in the winds, the tides and even the sunshine. An' den deres hydrogen fuel cells, too, ta tink about."

"Dem two-legs gots short memories: wasn't that long ago I heard bout da Exxon Valdez, ennit?" Raven says.

"Why don't you turn that G.C. into stone?" Raven asks. He looks at Xaals.

"I could an' I would but where would I stop. Six billion stones across the world is a lot," Xaals replies.

"Hmm, we see what you mean," Raven and Mink answer together.

"Ohh my, poor cousin Vancouver Island marmot is on the list too, I see," says Raven.

"An orca, L-pod, made it on to the list too, see there," says Mink. "Who da thought it?" he points to the pages of the list.

"Hmm, my favourites are on the list," Xaals says: "Taylor's checkerspot, the mardon skipper, the island marble butterflies are at risk, as well. No bumblebees, no butterflies means no more plant peoples across the land. What dem wheat people gonna eat den?"

"What I want to know," Raven pipes in, "is who puts dese people at risk in the first?"

"Good question," Xaals replies. He scans the list from end to end.

"Whatcha lookin' for?" Mink asks as he peers over transformer's left shoulder.

Xaals the transformer thumbs through page after page of the list. He licks his right thumb every couple of pages as he leafs through the list.

"I know who you're lookin' for," Raven answers. "I was lookin' for dem too, but you won't find em—they're not on the list."

Xaals looks up from the list. He looks first at Mink, then he turns to Raven: "The ones most at risk, the ones who made the list. The ones responsible for puttin' so many other peoples an' families at risk aren't on it.

"Not yet anyway," Xaals and Mink and Raven say in unison.

Revenge of the Chick Flick

by Stephanie Bowen

PROVIDED IMAGE

Women's Liberation moves to the next level.

I was amazed to find myself in the theatre watching Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*. I was even more surprised when the lights came up, and I realized how much I enjoyed myself. Beyond all else, these films are fun. They possess highly stylized, eclectic cinematography alongside the trendy dialogue Tarantino does best.

They also express Tarantino's hang-up with extreme violence.

But when I left that theatre in November, I felt empowered. That's when I realized that for the first time ever I'd seen women in an action film who I could identify with. And that perhaps it was not violent movies, which I previously loathed and despised, so much as action movies that I could not stomach. Chick flicks are notorious for their sentimentality, action flicks for their ruthlessness. Both are known for their banal stereotyping of men and women.

Until, perhaps, now.

For those looking deeper, *Kill Bill* is ripe with symbolism. Almost every feminine stereotype is present: Vernita Green, the suburban housewife, O-Ren Ishii, the Geisha; Go-Go, the schoolgirl assassin, and the main character, the Bride. At one point Darryl Hannah dresses as a nurse, at another Uma Thurman dons traditional Mexican robes similar to those worn by prostitutes in the previous scene. And yet all of these women pack a very mean punch.

Go-Go the schoolgirl sits at the bar, and asks her neighbour if he would like to penetrate her. When he replies with a leering yes, she penetrates him—with her knife.

The Bride loses her husband and child in the film's opening moments and swears bloody revenge.

When challenged as a result of her gender and ethnicity, Japanese Mafia boss O-Ren Ishii makes heads roll.

Kill Bill is not your typical slice-'em-and-dice-'em thriller.

Major complaints about the second instalment of the film centre on its sentimentality. Volume 2 contains roughly half the action and twice the dialogue of the first, returning to the Bride's history and her relationship with Bill, adding substance to what was previously only style.

The second half also rounds out the first with some much-needed character development. The Bride turns from the sketch of a bitter assassin into a plausible person, showing stress under the pressure to hunt down Bill and slay him.

Time and again throughout the series we see her ruthless drive to succeed (willing her toes to work after being near-paralyzed was only the beginning), but Volume 2 manages to remind us that she is more. The further into Bill and the Bride's relationship we delve, the more ruthlessness and sentimentality are mixed. And so was born the action chick flick.

For all of us film buffs who happen to be women, the chick flick and everything it says about females (namely, that we enjoy only romance, charming men and great costuming) has been the bane of our existence since its origin. In much the same way that the action film misrepresents men, who can't possibly all enjoy car chases, explosions, and porn-inspired plotlines, the chick flick has always made us look just plain silly. And, until recently, the action flick has made us look just plain weak.

Perhaps, then, the two volumes of this gorefest, when viewed together, speak volumes of their own. Consider *Kill Bill* as the best of both worlds: there is that adrenaline rush that only samurai swords and limb-loss can bring, alongside emotion and, believe it or not, a respect for human life. Women can, even on that big Hollywood screen, be the active chick: the mother, the lover, the fighter and, absolutely, the Bride.

Bowie tour fuelled by '80s revival

by Martin McCarvill

The energized crowd leaving David Bowie's first Vancouver show in eight years was full of excited chatter and reminiscence of his early '80s glory days.

Dolled up in denim, teased hair and pink and black accessories, more than one concertgoer confessed to a longtime fixation with the man, the music, and the clothes that are enjoying a resurgence on the streets.

"He's an icon," said UVic student Caitlin Croteau. "And he's beautiful."

"I've loved him ever since the first time I saw *Labyrinth*. So has every girl I know," gushed her friend Heidi Wudrick.

The girls' reactions are typical of those returning from Bowie's recent concert at GM Place that kicked off the Canadian leg of the tour supporting his new album, *Reality*. The last Canadian show was in Kelowna (of all places) on April 11—for the lucky among us, the perfect time for a post-exam road trip.

Looking about at the wristbands and asymmetrical haircuts at the show, Heidi's mention of Bowie's memorable role in the pink tights of Jareth the Goblin King in the 1985 film *Labyrinth* helped shed light on his resurgent popularity.

In the late '70s Bowie's famous Ziggy Stardust period was long behind him, and his Berlin trilogy of albums were considered difficult and inaccessible. But by the early '80s the rest of the world had caught up, and his work had helped spawn new wave, synth-pop, post-punk and goth-rock.

Bowie's 1980 track "Ashes to Ashes" hit Number 1 in Britain, and his 1983 album *Let's Dance* sold five million copies and finally established him as a superstar in North America.

To focus on Bowie's own commercial success is to play down his influence, however. Virtually every group popular between 1980 and 1984 took its sound and fashion directly from him. In France, the colourful androgyny of rock stars like Culture Club's Boy George and the Eurythmics' Annie Lennox was even called "le look Bowie." He was out of his mind on cocaine before that was cool, too.

Bowie's been through some rough patches since those days—the last time he toured Vancouver, in 1996, fans came for opening act Nine Inch Nails, then walked out before Bowie came onstage. But today Nine Inch Nails are has-beens, and Bowie's cooler than ever, spoofing his fashion-icon image in films like *Zoolander*—his reputation redeemed by a little thing we used to call the "retro movement."

Getting garishly dolled up, going out and dancing to the hits of the MTV era started as a big ironic joke in the late '90s. Then kids without nostalgic memories of '80s music and fashion from their childhood started to realize that neon colour schemes, lightning-bolt earrings, skintight denim and Flock of Seagulls haircuts aren't just funny, they're fun. (Okay, maybe Flock of Seagulls haircuts are just funny).

The first wave of bands to proclaim their honest love for the rock of the past—groups like The Strokes and The White Stripes—paved the way for others to reclaim the music of the '80s specifically. From the whole goofy electroclash trend to dance-punk like The Rapture and hard rockers like The Darkness, each successive movement has seemed a little less ironic than its predecessors. It's become possible again to sport leg warmers or feather your hair not as a joke, but because you sincerely think it's totally awesome.

And now that new wave music and fashion are back with a vengeance, Bowie seems determined to remind the crowd that the '80s were only so cool because he invented them in the '70s. At his Vancouver show, he sported studded denim, a sleeveless top and a jaunty scarf, and sang a set heavy on songs from his latest album, which has an upbeat sound reminiscent of Blondie, with Debbie Harry replaced by Bowie's croon. He also shrewdly included every one of his '80s hits, which were met with a rapturous reception.

Bowie is famous for being a musical chameleon—able to change his sound and image to exploit trends. Right now, he is perfectly in synch with pop culture and fashion.

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Crowned King shuns suspenders, shucks jeans

by Vanessa Neuman

Crowned King sounds about as far as you can get from Vespas and chequered suspenders while still having half of your band play brass instruments.

The Vancouver-based band has a substantial horn section—trombone, trumpet and tenor saxophone—but, as lead singer Shaun Frank explains, the band now shies away from the label of ska.

"[We] don't really care what people call [our music]—some people consider all bands with horns in them ska music. To us ska is an extension of reggae—we've been there, we've done that and we're not doing that anymore," he says. "Our new music is way more rock. We're a rock and roll band with a horn section."

Their new album, *Break the Silence*, sounds much different from their debut disc *Tempting Fate*. Think of them as the latest version of ska/punk, or rock music with an orchestral touch, or maybe something totally different.

In any case, after years of struggling to make it as a band, Crowned King is starting to create a name for themselves. Recent exposure includes good local radio support, extensive touring—this summer will be their fourth year playing in the Vans Warped Tour—and the added bonus of being poster children for Bluenotes, a national jeans store.

"For us at the time, [when] we were a dying band in dire need of any pennies that we could get to keep touring, it was a nice thing to come along," says Frank about the Bluenotes deal. "They carry our T-shirts in every store across Canada. They carry our records in every store across Canada. You can't really pay for that kind of exposure."

Sounds reasonable, but in a decade when any hint of mass consumerism can send fans running for the hills, was the thought of being construed as sell-outs by their fan base a concern?

"I hate the whole concept of 'selling out' because we've never once in our careers done something that we didn't want to do," says Frank, a tad defensively perhaps. You get the impression he might have been asked this question a little too much. "Call us a sell-out if you want, we've never had anyone tell us what to do. Yeah, that was our biggest worry, but that was something that we felt we had to do at the time. We just wanted to get our music out there."

VANESSA NEUMAN PHOTO

Shaun Frank says selling jeans isn't selling out.

Despite having to play the opening spot out of four bands at the Alexisonfire show at Legends, Crowned King's catchy music and sheer spastic energy on stage had the crowd worked up, even though it was before 11 p.m. And with an upcoming tour at the end of May with the Distillers, the band is looking forward to playing for some large crowds.

"Right now I'm like a kid in a candy store," says Frank about the larger shows. "I grew up dreaming of this."

Death Cab drives for sadness and hope

Sugary pop wails meet stone-cold heartbreak

Death Cab for Cutie
Transatlanticism
Barsuk Records

by Briony Smith

Death Cab for Cutie, Seattle's indie superstars, have released a beautiful album that is sad pop at its happy best.

Ben Gibbard, the lead singer and emo heartthrob with the voice of spun sugar and gold, is his usual winsome earnest best on *Transatlanticism*, the quartet's fourth effort.

A great deal of Death Cab for Cutie's appeal lies in its front man's beautiful lyric-poems and distinctive voice. While their 2001 hit *The Photo Album* was a pleasing soulful compilation of pure pop philosophy—with lyrics like "We peered through the windows, new bottoms on barstools but the people remain the same" in "A Movie Script Ending"—*Transatlanticism* is a great album that shows a band poised to become the kings of the poignant ballad, the best thing going in indie-rock-pop-whatever today.

The sounds of the record are lovely: plenty of tinkling piano, up-tempo "Bah-bahs!" and retro claps and tambourines. The album makes you feel like bopping down the sunny street in a new pair of sneakers, rocking out with your iPod and savouring some gum. The merry xylophone of "Title and Registration" and the sugary pop-wails of "Expo '86" all conjure up happy memories like sucking on lemon candies while being ferried to the zoo for a day of merriment with the fam, or half-hour sigh-sessions reminiscing about past crushes on obscure actors.

This music is fun and happy and glad and gee-golly-whiz foot-tapping perfection. Except it's not.

Portions of *Transatlanticism* have a more somber tone and evoke memories and thoughts that are a little greyer. "A Lack of Color" reminds one of those weird quasi-music videos they used to play on Sesame Street in the '70s, which featured a variety of multi-coloured children frolicking in fields of daisies with puppies. "Passenger Seat" has the vibe of a tune that would be used to underscore a particularly tasteful love scene in an independent film starring Steve Buscemi.

The heavier feel of these songs leads you to reexamine the sweetness 'n' light you were glowing to earlier, where one finds that Gentle Ben ain't singin' about roses or candy or kittens. This whole album is actually about stone-cold heartbreak.

Those chipper xylophones? Accompanying a discussion on "disappointment" and "regret." Ben's peppy wailing? Bemoaning the vicious cycle of a relationship gone bad. Even the uber-jolly Bah-baaah!'s of the amazing song "The Sound of Settling" conceal a freaking out over settling for the wrong person.

But the perky sounds-cum-palpable sorrow of Death Cab for Cutie does not sully the songs—it enriches the record.

If you're happy, you can appreciate the happiness of the sounds and the jubilation that Ben Gibbard emotes in the musical catharsis of *Transatlanticism*.

If you're sad, you can empathize with the stunning lyrics of this album. Gibbard has a ridiculous talent for writing lyrics that are both gorgeous and also highly relatable, like the song "Tiny Vessels" which contains the heart-breaking lyrics, "Every bite I made that left a mark / as tiny vessels oozed into your neck and formed the bruises / that you said you didn't want to fade / but they did and so did I that day."

The title track "Transatlanticism" showcases just how far Death Cab for Cutie have come since the lighter tone of past albums. The percussion is persistent, passionate; the guitars are subtle, careful, while the piano weaves itself through Ben's simple word-pictures. The track tells the tale of a man who watches the Atlantic ocean being born, separating him from his beloved. He mourns, "I need you so much closer," the drums and the guitars getting louder and louder, the pounding of a plaintive broken heart. Surely this song is one of the most beautiful and heartfelt songs produced in many years.

Transatlanticism is a sad record, yet one filled with hope. The happy songs are filled with it, but so are the sad ones. *Transatlanticism* is an album that is incredibly human. Human and amazing.

Canucks shakedown a taste of things to come

by Norman Ed Baskerville

After Vancouver's first-round series loss to the upstart Calgary flames on April 19, orca-emblemed jerseys, hats and car flags all got shoved into the closet, along with dreams of the Canucks skating around the ice hoisting the Stanley Cup. And now, the team's General Manager Brian Burke is out of a job.

"Even when you know it's coming, it's a kick in the ass," said Burke at a May 5 post-firing press conference at General Motors Place.

Ever since Martin Gelinas' seventh game overtime goal ended Vancouver's 2003–2004 season, fans and local sports reporters alike have argued that if big, bad Bertuzzi's suspension hadn't extended into the playoffs, the series outcome would have differed.

But regardless of Bertuzzi's attempt to punch Colorado player Steve Moore's head square off his shoulders, Cloutier's injury, or even the Canucks' playoff bow to the Flames, Burke said he believed the decision to fire him was made a long time ago.

GRAHAM STARK GRAPHIC

Team president Stan McCammon said, "It's insulting, in this instance, to suggest our inability to get through that round is Brian's fault."

The fact of the matter is: Burke's canning probably had more to do with him wanting a raise than anything else. How else can the Canucks ownership's failure to sign him to a contract extension during the past 12 months be explained?

Burke said that ownership never gave him a reason for his dismissal. Looking at his record as General Manager, it is hard to find one that adds up.

The Canucks have made the playoffs for the last four years. This season, they won their division with 101 points, three less than the team record of 104 they posted in 2002–2003—no small feat considering Vancouver finished the season with 64 points, the third-worst record in the NHL, when Burke was hired six years ago.

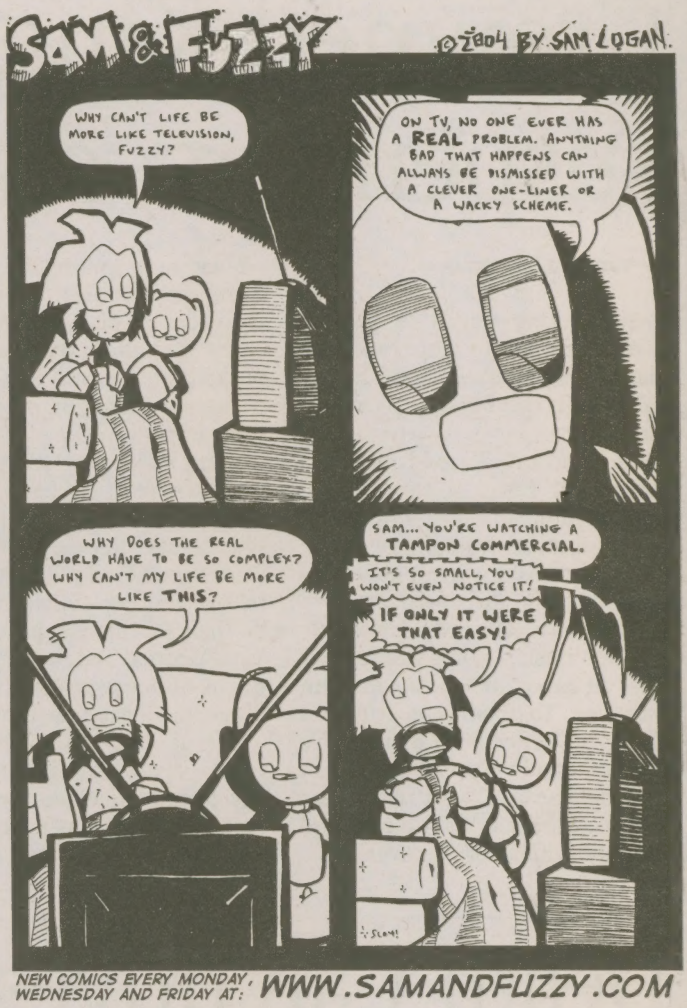
Burke's team boasts two of the league's top forwards in Naslund and Bertuzzi, and he managed to successfully trade the then-Canuck crybaby, Pavel Bure, for star defenceman Ed Jovanovski. But best of all, he managed to sign them at $5- to $7-million during a year when players posting equal or worse performances raked in millions more.

This year, the Canucks played in front of a sell-out crowd during every home game at GM Place, and the team sold an all-time high of 16,600 season-tickets.

On the same day that David Nonis was hired as Burke's replacement, it was announced that the Chief Operating Officer Dave Cobb will now be responsible for leading the overall strategic direction of the company, including broadcast, sponsorship and ticket sales, finance, human resources, communications and arena operations. It seems odd that the Canuck suit pulling the strings is an accountant and not a hockey guy, but today's NHL is more about bottom-line profit than the game itself.

Burke turned around the floundering Vancouver team, making it competitive and profitable, and he was rewarded with walking papers.

Canucks fans be warned. Don't be surprised if some of your favourite players are traded or not resigned. The Burke move smells like the beginning of a team about to make big changes, and you can bet they'll be motivated by cost over loyalty and entertainment.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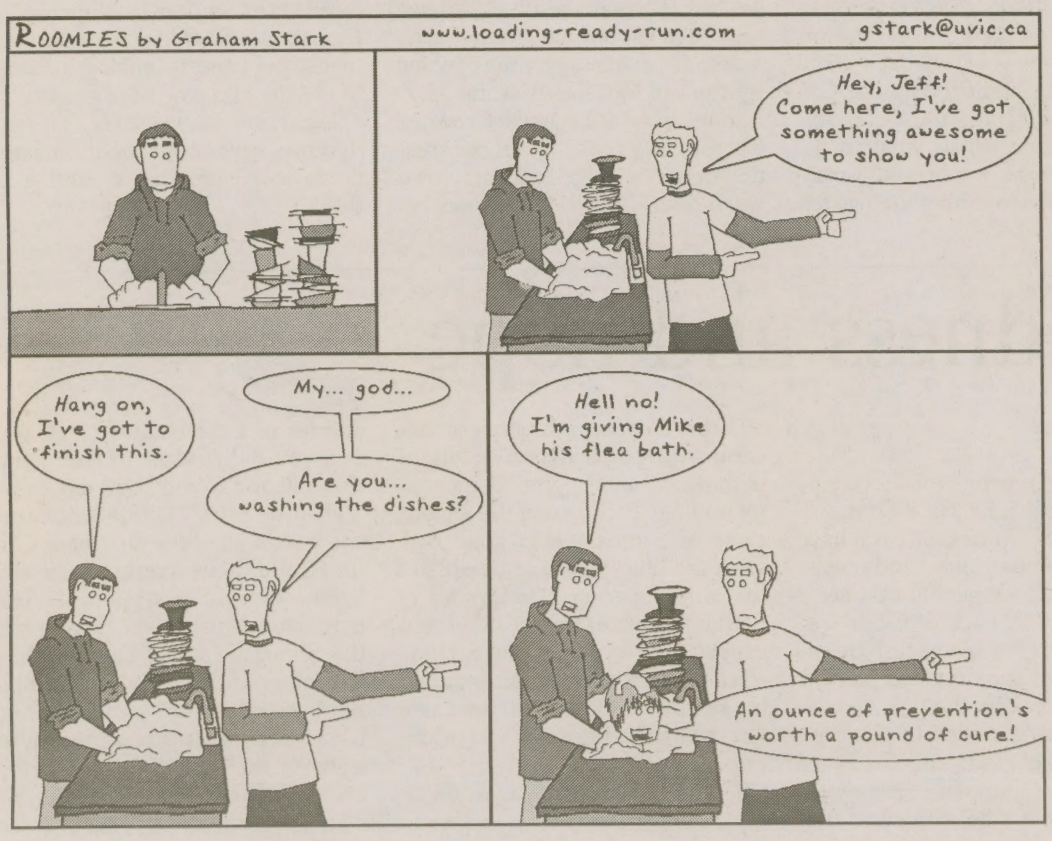
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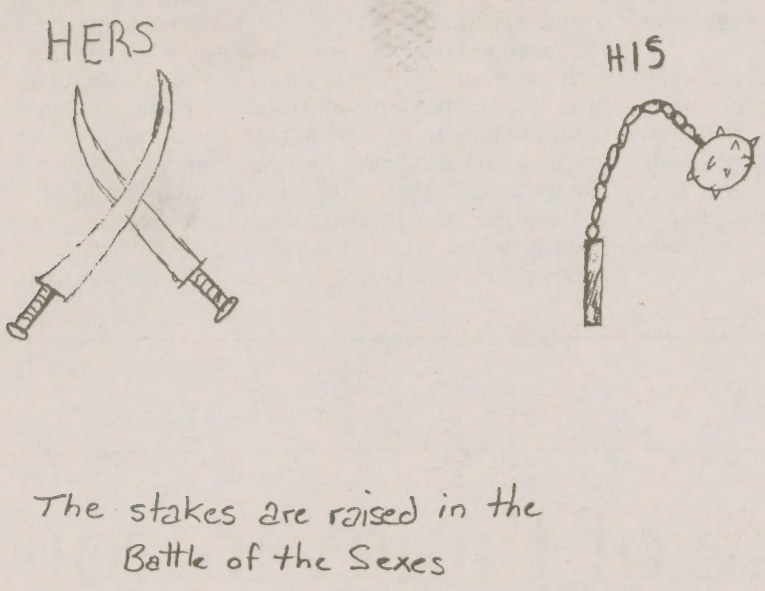

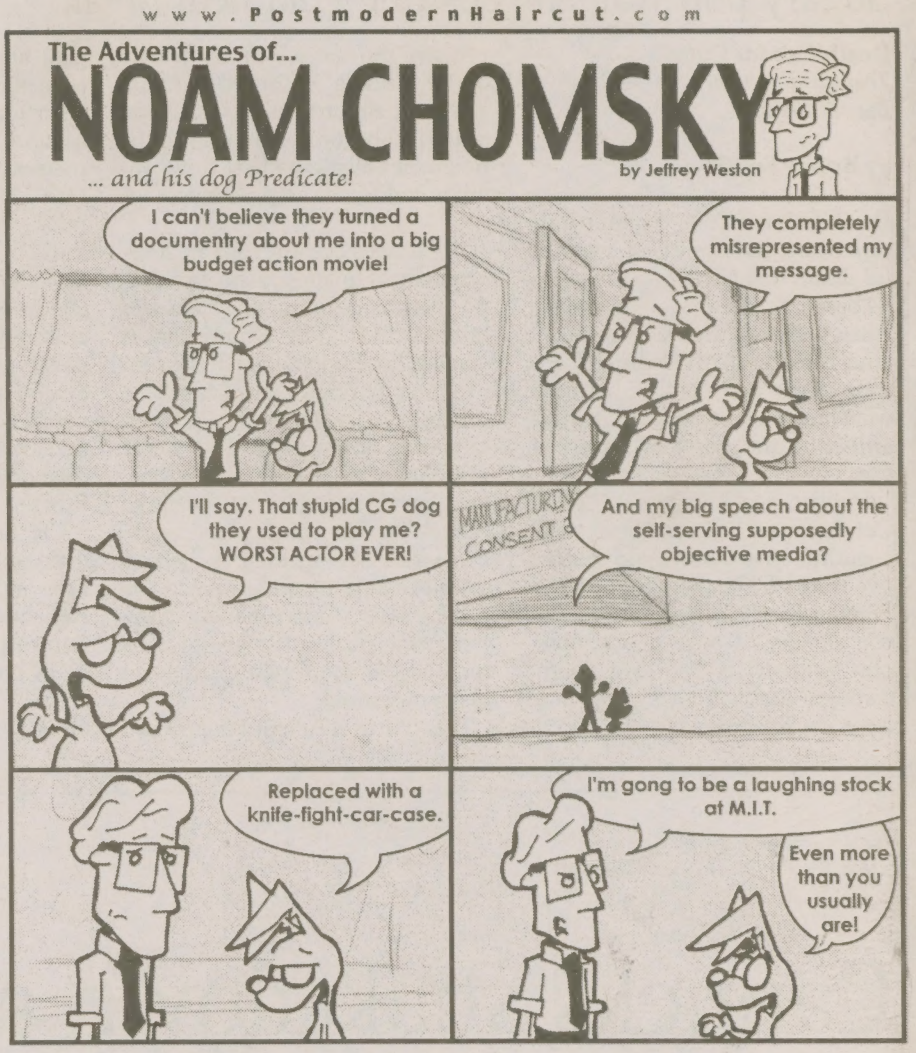
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The Victoria Writers' Society meets the first Wednesday of each month at 234 Menzies Street in the New Horizons Centre in James Bay. Meetings begin at 7:15 p.m., are free and open to the public. New, emerging and established writers are welcome. Bring a short piece to share. Wed., June 2, our speaker will be Mada Johnson, Editor of Island Parent. We are also seeking submissions for our new magazine, Island Writer, which debuts this summer.
www.VictoriaWriters.com

The summer is coming and people with disabilities are in need of your assistance to get outside and enjoy it! Recreation Intergration Victoria is looking for volunteers of all ages to provide one-to-one assistance for people with disabilities in recreational settings. To inquire about one-to-one volunteer positions or the many other volunteering opprotunities this summer contact **Dustin** at **477-6314 ext.15.** Help someone else have the summer of a lifetime!

The VICTORIA CHORAL SOCIETY, directed by Michael Gormley, sings "BROADWAY MEDLEYS" from West Side Story, South Pacific, The Sound of Music, Porgy and Bess, and Showboat. Saturday, May 29, 2004 at 8:00 p.m. Christ Cathedral (Quadra at Rockland). Call 381-0677 for more information.

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